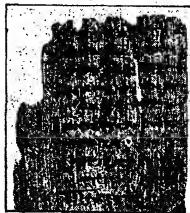


WENT round to the British Museum last week and consulted Mr. T. C. Skeat, Deputy Keeper of the Manuscript Department, on the news from Cairo about the discovery of a "Gospel according to St. Thomas."

Mr. Skeat showed me the tattered fragments of papyrus found on the site of Oxyrhynchus, a chief city of ancient Egypt, by two Oxford scholars



The British Museum Fragment.

In 1903, The British Museum fragment is in Greek and begins "These are the . . . words which Jesus the living (Lord) spoke to . . . and to Thomas, and he said unto them, Everyone that hearkens to these words shall never taste of death." There follow five apocryphal sayings of Christ.

In 1945 a large hoard of early gnostic writings was discovered in Upper Egypt and it is now announced in Cairo that one of the manuscripts appears to be a full translation into Coptic of the British Museum papyrus.

It has taken more than ten years to finish haggling with the farmers who found the

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manuscripts in a huge jar, and to pay off the various speculators who became involved in the find.

Now an international committee of experts is at work on the manuscripts in the Coptic Museum in Cairo and they are hoping at the British Museum that the first translations will be available by the end of the year.

Mr. Maugham's Day

MR. SOMERSET MAUGHAM is here again on his autumn visit, being feted by his friends, catching up on the theatre and seeing far too many people.

Even to me, who are not eighty-three, his days seem ridiculously overcrowded. Why, for instance, should he open tomorrow afternoon at the Admiralty Navy Stores exhibition of prints and drawings by Heinemann authors? There seems little enough reason for the exhibition, except as evidence that authors, even Heinemann authors, cannot necessarily paint as well as they write.

But Mr. Maugham will do anything for his friends and his publisher, Mr. A. S. Frere of Heinemann, is one of them.

The Broken Pen

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I told him last week that I admired his handwriting and he said that the first rule was

to write with a gold nib instead of a steel ball.

"I have a whole battery of good old-fashioned fountain pens," he said. "Many years ago a journalist asked me what I was writing and I said: 'Nothing, because my fountain pen has broken.' He asked of this piece of nonsense. The next thing I knew, fountain pens started pouring in from manufacturers all over the world and since then I've had no excuse to stop writing."

"What are you writing now?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Maugham.

Motor Mart

EVERY year, at the Motor Car Trials Court of London formed into a vast marriage bureau. From Wednesday onwards, thousands of unions will be forged, to last for any-

thing from a brief, angry honeymoon to a lifetime.

The man chiefly responsible for the introductions is, and has been since the Crystal Palace in 1920, the unruled, competent Mr. A. A. Goode, Exhibition Manager of the S.M.M.T., who has to oversee some 4,000 men and spend about £80,000 before the show can open.

When I visited him at the end of last week the parquet flooring was just being laid. There was not a stand to be seen and in the huge naked hall there was only one small and lonely saloon gyrating steadily on a turntable.

Mr. Goode is not dismayed. In his time he has married over every type of emergency. The doors of his marriage mart will open on Wednesday and, even without the

dazzle of a Docker Daimler, there will be an American exhibit with television on the back seat, two turbo-jet cars, Donald Campbell's "Bluebird" and several tons of flowers and bunting to quicken the most sluggish heartbeat.

How Now, Mr. Moss?

LAST Sunday, Stirling Moss wrote quite casually in *The Sunday Times* that he drives with his hands at ten minutes to two on the steering-wheel.

Hitherto, pace Moss, these clues have been infallible.

Music's Cousteau

IN commissioning a three-act ballet from Hans Werner Henze, Sadler's Wells has stolen a march upon our graver musical institutions. Henze, the crop-headed neapolitan wonder-boy of German music, has, at the age of just thirty, a European reputation which many a senior composer might envy. In this country, however, his music has rarely been performed.

Long residence in Ischia and on the Neapolitan seashore no doubt equips him to treat the subject of Ondine with particular sympathy. With his easy command of English (he is a close friend of Sir William Walton) and his liking for naval blazers, Henze can have no difficulty in overcoming the xenophobia always latent in English musical life.

I am sorry, though, that the director of Sadler's Wells could not have dredged up more original themes for his debut; but Henze is a practised hand, composing his "Jack Pudding" survives in its (admittedly ludicrous title) and he will no doubt recharge the batteries of this hoary submarine epic.

Heli-News

WITH the L.C.C.'s simultaneous rejection of five schemes for the development of Victoria Station, the powerful champions of the helicopter have been further rebuffed.

Meanwhile, in Washington, work has started on the new State Department, which is to have a "heliport" on its roof so that diplomatic pouches may be flown direct to the national airport.

The 8,000 State Department employees, now dispersed in twenty-nine buildings, will be housed beneath the heliport, and below them will be vast garage space.

This monumental scheme makes our own fiddling with helicopters underground garages and the Whitehall sprawl look rather infantile. My only consolation, from a quick glance at the plans, is that the new State Department will certainly be an architectural adornment to America's capital. I also note that the Secretary of State's banqueting and reception rooms have been placed on the top floor, just below the helicopter landing-strip.

Bag and Baggage

THE future of Colin Wilson is an inexhaustible topic of debate in literary circles.

The splash caused by "The Outsider" was phenomenal and, though the size of a Gallic impression is often a matter for amused conjecture in the book trade, conservative estimates add up the present

book, a novel on the man he considers the classic "outsider" —Jack the Ripper.

Hon.?

WITH cries (no doubt) of "Dig that classy cat!" Americans were last week admiring full page coloured advertisements depicting Lady Augusta Balfour, Lord John Balfour and the Hon. Piers Morgan snugly and tastefully clad in Vivella children's wear. Truth in advertising?

The names are fictitious and the children American.

Box-office Politics

THE spectacular success of the Bolshoi Ballet has overshadowed the quietly supreme ministry of the Variety Theatre of the Big-O's, rivaling it being much stronger than political bonds. I was not surprised to find that there has been no contact between the two Communist companies, nor even a graceful exchange of seats for each other's performances.

When I visited the Chinese off-stage they expressed delight with their reception here and no hint of jealousy at the superior publicity accorded the Russian dancers. They prefer to give themselves to being photographed out of sight.

They have not visited Limehouse, nor even a Chinese restaurant. They stick close to their Soho hotel and eat Western.

The troupe is paid by the State, who also maintain their training school in Peking and take all their profits. When I asked one of the company if he preferred this to being an independent artist, he burst into a Fuss Over English Egg-head."

But what is it all about and where will Colin Wilson go from here? The debate, sympathetic to a brilliant and likeable young man but with critical second thoughts on the writer, continues.

Interim judgment will be pronounced next year when Wilson publishes his second

—Los Angeles Times."

Hey!

"DENNIS MORGAN plans to produce 'Red, Red Rose,' a musical biography based on the life of Robert Burns, in Scotland."

"He says yes," said the interpreter, blandly.

nine impressions to well over 20,000 copies.

How many of these copies have been read and how many are "furniture sales" — the trade name for the snob book left conspicuously lying around — is a mystery. One acid book-seller describes "The Outsider" as the book that everyone

wants to have read but nobody wants to read.

Meanwhile, Colin Wilson, with his romantic good looks, his Bohemian habits and that famous sleeping bag, here is fully posed, with studious author for the "Life" photographer. He is the literary heart-throb of the undergraduate and -ette. The cover of the American "Saturday Review of Literature" has been his and "Life" has pithily featured him under the title "Fuss Over English Egg-head."

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